United Nations A/HRC/28/NGO/120

General Assembly

Distr.: General
25 February 2015

English only

Human Rights Council
Twenty-eighth session
Agenda item 3
Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[16 February 2015]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.15-03533 (E)
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Challenges to Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) in Sri Lanka in 2014[1]

In 2014 Sri Lankan HRDs faced a number violations as enumerated below. A new government is in place after elections in January 2015 and it has made some positive commitments on investigating past reprisals against HRDs and journalists. Despite some such positive signs it's not clear yet if the culture of impunity in the Country will be reversed. The UN Human Rights Council and OHCHR should closely monitor the actions of the new government in Sri Lanka and require it to implement its commitments and end impunity.

1. Reprisals against those cooperating with the UN and for accountability for war crimes

The government's opposition to a UN investigation into allegations of gross human rights violations[2] was accompanied by a crackdown on advocates for accountability. Numerous human rights defenders were discredited as traitors and terrorist supporters[3], attacked, threatened and accused by the state run media of giving false information to the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC).[4] Then President Mahinda Rajapaksha called supporters of the UN investigation as traitors opposed to peace[5], threatened legal action against anyone who cooperated with the body"[6]. Three HRDs were arrested during the March session of the UNHRC[7] and one remains in detention as of 16th February 2015.[8] Even the Minister of Justice was discredited for cooperating with the UN.[9]

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights was also subjected to a smear campaign.[10] While the investigation was in progress. In October 2014 a Tamil man was reportedly arrested by the Terrorism Investigation Division (TID) in

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[1] INFORM Human Rights Documentation Centre (Inform), a member organisation of FORUM-ASIA in Sri Lanka, associates itself with this submission.

[2] The 25th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) passed a resolution condemning the continuing climate of impunity for past and present human rights violations and appointing a "comprehensive investigation into alleged serious violations and abuses of human rights and related crimes by both parties in Sri Lanka". See http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14447&LangID=E for resolution. (Last accessed 10th Feb. 2015)

[3] For example, see http://srilankabrief.org/2014/09/pro-govt-mob-mocks-leading-civil-society-activists-in-sri-lanka/, http://srilankabrief.org/2014/08/puppies-for-sale-poster-campaign-to-intimidate-hrds/ and http://srilankabrief.org/2014/08/sri-lanka-shoot-ngo-traitors-and-throw-them-foxes-to-eat/, last accessed on 13th Feb. 2015)

[4] https://ihrdc.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/reprisals-against-those-cooperating-with-the-un-inform-30may2014.pdf (Last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[5] http://www.tbcuk.net/?p=28178 (last accessed 10th Feb. 2015)

[6] http://www.ceylontoday.lk/51-61100-news-detail-govt-warns-against-testifying-before-unhrc-inquiry.html (last accessed 10th Feb. 2015)

[7] They were Ms. Balendran Jeyakumari, Mr. Ruki Fernando, Rev. Fr. Praveen Mahesan. Ms. Jeyakumari's daughter was one of the children that had welcomed the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights for an event in Colombo on the international day against disappearances in 2013. Her son had disappeared after surrendering to the Army in 2009 and she had been an active campaigner against disappearances. Ruki Fernando, had travelled to Geneva for lobbying in relation to the UN resolution in December 2013 and February 2014, and had been cooperating extensively with UN human rights mechanisms, meeting UN officials in Geneva and Colombo, making regular submissions and complaints to UN bodies and participating in sessions of the UN Human Rights Council. After his release from detention and before a gag order, he told media that "I was repeatedly asked who in Geneva, who outside Sri Lanka was I sharing information with? It seemed very clear they took great care for other nations not to hear any alternative information or perspectives from within Sri Lanka". http://edition.cnn.com/2014/03/19/world/asia/sri-lanka-ruki-fernando-arrest/, last accessed 14th Feb. 2015). Ruki also said that the "government is particularly clear that no information should be provided to the UN Human Rights Council currently in session in Geneva" (http://njviehland.wordpress.com/2014/03/22/ruki-fernando-is-out-of-detention-but-hes-not-free/ last accessed 14th Feb. 2015).

[8] Ms. Jeyakumari remains detained as of 16th Feb.

[9] https://ihrdc.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/reprisals-against-those-cooperating-with-the-un-inform-30may2014.pdf (Last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[10] According to the High Commissioner, "Sri Lanka propagandists had for many years described me as a tool of the LTTE, calling her the "Tamil Tigress in the UN". This was she said "not only wildly incorrect" but "deeply offensive" suggesting that such

Kilinochchi for distributing witness forms intended to assist the UN investigation.[11] In November, a man who had allegedly encouraged Tamils to submit information to the UN was killed.[12] The government also threatened to take appropriate action against those who give evidence to the UN investigation through skype.[13]

2. Reprisals and challenges in engaging with international community

In September 2014, the Deputy British High Commissioner in Sri Lanka reported that she was followed during a field visit and that persons who met her had been questioned.[14] Earlier that month, a Tamil family in the North visited by the British High Commissioner had been threatened by the military.[15] In January, the US Embassy in Colombo claimed that visa was refused for a visit by the USA's Ambassador at large for Women's issues.[16] In September 2014, the Defence Ministry compelled an Australian University to disinvite two prominent Sri Lankan HRDs from an international conference on torture in Thailand.[17] In August, a foreign academic – activist who had come for an academic conference was detained and interrogated, and persons he met were also interrogated and intimidated.[18]

3. Reprisals against anti-disappearances campaigners[19]

In August 2014, a mob led by Buddhist Monks forcefully dispersed a meeting of Tamil families of the disappeared, accusing them of being terrorist supporters, intent on discrediting the Government by supporting an international war crimes inquiry.[20] The following day, the mob held a press conference, making false allegations against the anti-disappearance activists".[21] In November 2014, Ms. Mauri Jayasinghe, was abducted after receiving death threats, due to her campaign to find her disappeared husband.[22] Those protesting against disappearances were reportedly threatened by the military. Families of disappeared persons were prevented from attending religious observances and were also obstructed and intimidated before and after they appeared before a Presidential Commission of Inquiry.[23] On 30th August 2014, the International Day of the Disappeared, the Police tried to block families of disappeared persons when they were holding a peaceful protest.[24]

4. Freedom of Expression

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abuse had "reached an extraordinary crescendo ...with at least three Government Ministers joining in"(See http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=13673, last accessed 10th Feb. 2015)

[11] http://www.colombomirror.com/?p=715 (Last accessed 12th Feb. 2015)

[12] http://www.tamilguardian.com/article.asp?articleid=12834 (Last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[13] http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=106183 (Last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[14] http://blogs.fco.gov.uk/lauradavies/2014/09/30/looking-over-my-shoulder/ (Last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[15] http://tamilguardian.com/print.asp?articleid=12073 (Last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[16] http://www.sundaytimes.lk/140209/news/us-envoys-visit-us-embassy-rejects-eam-statement-85098.html (Last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[17] http://www.smh.com.au/world/academic-tells-conference-delegates-not-to-upset-sri-lanka-over-human-rights-20140912-10fzdq.html (Last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[18] https://ihrdc.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/repression-of-dissent-in-sri-lanka-august-2014-english-26sep2014.pdf (Last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[19] For detailed submission on the topic, see https://ihrdc.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/written-statement-submitted-by-the-asian-forum-for-human-rights-and-development-a-non-governmental-organization-in-special-consultative-status.pdf (Last accessed 10th Feb. 2015)

[20] http://groundviews.org/2014/08/07/mob-disrupts-meeting-of-families-of-disappeared-police-government-hound-participants/ (last accessed 10th Feb. 2015)

[21] http://groundviews.org/2014/08/07/mob-disrupts-meeting-of-families-of-disappeared-police-government-hound-participants/ (Last accessed 12th Feb. 2015)

[22] She was reportedly told "you talk too much. It is up to you to decide whether you want to live or die ...stop looking for your husband" (http://srilankabrief.org/2014/11/mother-twins-wife-disappeared-abducted-threatened-abused-fighting-justice/#more-20985, Last accessed 12th Feb. 2015)

[23] https://ihrdc.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/written-statement-submitted-by-the-asian-forum-for-human-rights-and-development-a-non-governmental-organization-in-special-consultative-status.pdf (Last accessed 10th Feb. 2015) and http://tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=37339 (Last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[24] http://tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=37363 (Last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

Journalists were prevented from reporting on court cases heard in open courts.[25] Sinhalese Editors in Colombo and Tamil journalists in North were subjected to interrogation by authorities.[26] A film screening in the North was disrupted[27] and author of a Tamil poetry book about wartime experiences was also interrogated.[28] Media training to Tamil journalists had to be abandoned as facilitators and participants and their families were threatened.[29] The Convener of the Free Media Movement[30] and number of other journalists were threatened,[31] subjected to physical assaults[32] and

[25] In May and August, the Free Media Movement (FMM) reported that a ban had been imposed on any media coverage of the defamation case between the President's brother Mr. Gotabhaya Rajapaksa and the Sunday Leader newspaper regarding the controversial deals made by the Ministry of Defence in 2007 (http://srilankabrief.blogspot.ch/2014/05/sri-lanka-security-forces-should.html#more, last accessed 10th Feb. 2015) and https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/press-barred-again-from-covering-gotabayas-cross-examination-in-court/, last accessed 10th Feb. 2015) Journalists were also evicted from a Court and ordered not to report on the case of an alleged rape of two young Tamil girls by Navy personnel (http://www.tamilguardian.com/article.asp?articleid=11637, last accessed 10th Feb. 2015).

[26] Mr. Saman Wagaarchchi, Chief Editor of the Lakbima newspaper was summoned to Court regarding the publication of a satirical photograph depicting the then President's sister in law and shortly after, his sub editor was dismissed in April 2014 (http://www.ft.lk/2014/04/26/lawyers-for-democracy-condemn-the-harassment-of-lakbima-editor/, last accessed 10th Feb. 2015). Mr. K. W. Janaranjana, the Editor of Ravaya newspaper was questioned about an election related report in November (http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=115676, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015). Al Jazeera online journalist Dinouk Colombage was also reported to have been questioned for four hours by authorities over his reporting during the Aluthgama riots (http://lankanewsweb.net/news/8130-cid-quizzes-al-jazeera-journalist, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015). In the North, journalist Mr S.R. Lambart from Mannaar was reported to have been interrogated by the TID (http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=37303, last accessed 10th Feb. 2015) and the Convener of the Jaffna Press Club was also interrogated by authorities (https://ihrdc.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/repression-of-dissent-in-sri-lanka-august-2014-english-26sep2014.pdf , last accessed 13th Feb. 2015). A film maker refused to respond to summons on him by a "Religious Police Unit" and about his right to freedom of expression being violated (http://srilankabrief.org/2014/07/religious-police-hunting-a-film-maker/). A provincial journalist was also summoned to courts due to his investigative reporting in February (http://www.globaltamilnews.net/MobileArticle/tabid/81/language/si-LK/Default.aspx?pn=home&aid=103608, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[27] http://www.bbc.co.uk/sinhala/sri_lanka/2014/07/140728_lanka_ramanan_film.shtml (last accessed 10th Feb. 2015)

[28] http://www.jdslanka.org/index.php/news-features/human-rights/475-sri-lankas-anti-terror-squad-grills-priest-school-teachers-over-tamil-poetry-book (last accessed 10th Feb. 2015)

[29] One workshop in May organized by Transparency International Sri Lanka (TISL) was cancelled by the Ministry of Defence, despite it being a workshop on recommendations of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Committee. In June, it was again cancelled after disruption by protesters accusing the organisation of supporting terrorists led to the police asking the participants to leave. After leaving the vicinity and checking into a nearby hotel in Colombo the party were then told to leave immediately or else they would be removed by those who ordered that they leave. (http://www.tisrilanka.org/?p=11979, last accessed 10th Feb. 2015) In July, training at the Sri Lanka Press Institute (SLPI) by Rights Now Collective for Democracy and the Jaffna Press Club on digital security had to be cancelled after threats were made to storm the institution (http://srilankabrief.org/2014/07/sabotage-of-media-workshop-and-death-threats-are-govt-orchestrated-slwja/#more-19122, last accessed 10th Feb. 2015) and in October organisers of an awards ceremony held by TISL received death threats from a group calling themselves Patriotic Force (http://srilankabrief.org/2014/10/fmm-challenges-the-government-to-bring-culprits-to-book/#more-20709 last accessed 10th Feb. 2015). Staff members and more than 50% of the invited participants also received threatening SMS messages, forcing them to move to another venue. Those who stayed behind reported seeing people in plain clothes observing the venue, taking photographs, asking questions to staff and driving past throwing threatening messages towards the door (http://www.tisrilanka.org/?p=12277, last accessed 10th Feb. 2015). In the first quarter of the year, a journalists training in Polonanruwa was compelled to be cancelled by a mob led by Buddhist Monks (https://ihrdc.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/repression-of-dissent-in-sri-lanka-jan-march2014-english.pdf, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[30] http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/node/26753 (Last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[31] Such as Jaffna based journalist Mr. Navarathinam Kapilanath (http://www.tamilguardian.com/print.asp?articleid=11724, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015) and a group of Tamil journalists who were investigating Navy surveillance of Tamil land earmarked for Government development http://www.tamilguardian.com/article.asp?articleid=11529, last accessed 10th Feb. 2015). A Mannar based journalist was also threatened with death in April (https://ihrdc.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/repression-of-dissent-in-sri-lanka-april-2014-english.pdf, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015). In June, journalists covering ethnic riots against Muslims were attacked, threatened with death and were subjected to online threats being called "social media and twitter murders" by editor of a State run Daily News newspaper(https://ihrdc.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/repression-of-dissent-in-sri-lanka-june-2014-english.pdf, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

restricted from accessing certain parts of the country.[33] Foreign journalist's requests for visas were delayed and resulted in the prevention of international witnesses to the situation in Sri Lanka.[34]

5. Freedom of Assembly

Peaceful protests and events organized by students, trade unions and NGOs were attacked and some were prevented from being held in certain parts of the country.[35] Tamil communities were obstructed and prohibited from organizing

[32] Mr Sivagnanam Selvatheepan suffered serious injury after being attacked on his motorbike (http://colombogazette.com/2014/04/15/tamil-journalist-attacked-in-jaffna/, last accessed 12th Feb. 2015) and correspondent of the Jaffna Daily 'Uthyan' Mr. Sinnarasa Siventhiran survived an attempt on his life by two men who he says identified themselves as members of the Criminal Investigation Division (http://tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=37389, last accessed 10th Feb. 2015). A provincial correspondent of "Sirasa TV" was injured during an attempted abduction (http://newsfirst.lk/english/2014/05/newsfirst-correspondent-attempted-rescue-elephant-calf-attacked/33442, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015). Two journalists were also assaulted when they tried to cover baby elephants being kept illegally (http://www.divaina.com/2014/07/19/news25.html, in Sinhalese, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015) and two more journalists were attacked after Provincial Council elections in September (http://srilankabrief.org/2014/09/sri-lanka-journalists-assaulted-in-north-and-south/#more-20280, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[33] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rqOOIljvig#t=163 (In Sinhalese, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[34] BBC correspondent in Sri Lanka's request for extension of his visa was reported as having been refused (http://colombogazette.com/2014/04/19/bbc-correspondent-refused-a-visa/, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015) and a request for visa by a New York Times journalist was also delayed (http://www.thesundayleader.lk/2014/08/24/visa-on-hold-for-us-journo/, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[35] In March, a booking at the well known convention center in Colombo made by the Bar Association of Sri Lanka was cancelled (http://www.sundaytimes.lk/140309/news/vesting-of-police-powers-in-the-armed-forces-bmich-cancels-basls-booking-for-a-forum-88460.html, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015). Two civil society seminars were disrupted in Anuradhapura and Trincomalee districts in September (https://ihrdc.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/repression-of-dissent-in-sri-lanka-sept-2014-english-23oct2014.pdf, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015). In the first quarter of the year, a peaceful protest in commemoration of assassinated activist Mr Anthony Fernando was met by personnel carrying iron rods (http://www.vikalpa.org/?p=19683, in Sinhalese, last accessed 10th Feb. 2015) and the drama group the Society of Socialist Art were attacked on the street leaving nine people hospitalised. (http://www.lankatruth.com/home/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6602:govt-thugs-attack-streetdrama-troupe-&catid=36:top-stories&Itemid=124, last accessed 10th Feb. 2015). In May, protesting student activists were assaulted (http://www.sundaytimes.lk/140518/news/ahs-undergraduate-activists-assaulted-in-police-custody-and-hospitalised-99597.html, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015) while in August, villagers protesting against water pollution in Colombo district were assaulted, arrested and tear-gased (https://ihrdc.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/repression-of-dissent-in-sri-lanka-jan-march2014-english.pdf, last accessed 10th Feb. 2015). In May, Trade Union leaders reported that they were prevented from holding their May Day rally in Hyde Park Colombo (http://www.srilankannursing.net/May%20day%202014.html, in Sinhalese, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015). Trade Union meetings were also disrupted by pro-government groups and participants assaulted (http://www.hirunews.lk/90491/tense-situation-at-government-press, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015). In May, delegates to the World Conference on Youth in Colombo were also not allowed to hold a press conference (http://www.ceylontoday.lk/51-63517-news-detail-african-delegates-protest-at-bmich.html, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015). In July and again in September, protests on displacement in Jaffna was not allowed to be held by the Police (http://www.lankasrinews.com/view.php?22AOlv2acT5YAe4e4yMCc02aAmB3dd3PBmc30366AY2e4UY5f0ca2lOed3 and http://www.tamilguardian.com/article.asp?articleid=12108 last accessed 13th Feb. 2015) and in September, Police revoked permission already granted to have a peace march in Jaffna, in connection with 25th commemoration of a well known woman HRD and academic in Jaffna, who was killed by the LTTE (http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/south-asia/revisiting-a-tamil-democrats-legacy/article6436119.ece, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015). The Executive Director of the National Peace Council reported that 4 of their events on reconciliation were subjected to surveillance by the military and Police (http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=109117, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015). In October the General Secretary of the Free Trade Zone and General Employees Services Union (FTZ & GESU) complained to the Inspector General of Police that Union leaders were being assaulted and systematically suppressed (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sri-lanka-country-of-concern/sri-lanka-country-of-concern-latest-update-31-december-2014, last accessed 12th Feb. 2015). That month an injunction was ordered against striking Railway Professional Trade Union Alliance (http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=111850 , last accessed 12th Feb. 2015) and 300 fisherfolk had stones thrown at them as they protested outside the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Ministry, leaving three in hospital (http://www.ceylontoday.lk/51-75961-news-detail-fishers-protesting-eu-ban-pelted-with-stones.html, last accessed 10th Feb. 2015). In what is commonly known as "Black July", due to the anti-Tamil riots in 1983, police interrupted a banner-signing campaign held in Colombo, run by the Movement for Equal Rights (MER), removing the banner and arrested some of the participants

and participating in events to remember those who had been killed during the war.[36] The Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) and threat of prosecution under its draconian provisions is a fear that looms large on any assembly.

6. Freedom of Association

In May 2014, there were reports of government proposals to monitor local NGOs fundraising activities[37] and orders were made by the Ministry of Defence to freeze assets of overseas Tamil organisations.[38] In July 2014, NGOs received an order from the NGO Secretariat banning them from holding press conferences, issuing press releases and organizing trainings for journalists[39]. The former Prime Minister accused some NGOs of arming and assisting the LTTE during the war and branding NGOs as a threat to national security.[40] Soon after, NGOs were given a Notice by the Finance and Planning Ministry ordering that they seek prior approval before obtaining foreign funds.[41] The former President spoke of new laws to monitor and control NGOs in April 2014[42] and the Ministry of Defence was reportedly drafting new laws to monitor and control activities of NGOs in August 2014.[43] USAID was compelled to withdraw funding for voter education programs, following threats by the Ministry of Defence to investigate potential recipients of such funds.[44] Dissolving student unions also continued in 2014.[45]

7. Repression of Student activists and Academics

In May 2014, the Jaffna University was closed without warning[46] and teachers and students reported receiving death threats and being accused of terrorism after trying to pay their respects to the dead on the 5th anniversary of the end of the war.[47] In November, Jaffna University Teachers Association (JUTA) President, Dr A. Rasakumaran was questioned

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(http://www.lankaviews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11771:equal-rights-awareness-campaign-disrupted-by-police&catid=35:local&Itemid=48 (last accessed 10th Feb. 2015). Protesting political prisoner's families were warned that they could only see protesters bodies (http://srilankabrief.org/2014/08/parents-told-to-wait-to-see-the-dead-bodies-of-3-tamil-prisoners/#more-19696, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015).

[36] During the 5th anniversary of the end of the war strict orders banning public commemorations were imposed (http://www.adaderana.lk/news/war-remembrance-service-a-threat-to-harmony-police-, last accessed 10/2/15). There were reports of Tamil families being intimidated when visiting their local temple (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x0iqbamHavc, last accessed 10th Feb. 2015). The offices of the Tamil National People's Front (TNPF) and the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) were blocked and Government forces were filmed destroying floral tributes (http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=37215, last accessed 10th Feb. 2015). Organizers of a religious event to remember those killed was questioned and intimidated ((http://www.asianews.it/news-en/In-the-north,-Tamils-defy-government-to-remember-Fr-Sara,-who-died-during-the-Civil-War-31197.html, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015) In September, two events to remember civilians killed during the war were prevented by the Police (http://tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=37392 and http://tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=37375, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[37] http://www.ceylontoday.lk/52-62465-news-detail-new-laws-against-ngos-should-not-be-a-witch-hunt.html (last accessed 10th Feb. 2015)

[38] Human Rights Watch described this as being "aimed at restricting peaceful activism" (http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/04/07/sri-lanka-asset-freeze-threatens-peaceful-dissent, last accessed 10th Feb. 2015)

[39] http://srilankabrief.org/2014/07/sri-lanka-bans-ngos-engaging-in-public-communications-and-conducting-training/ (last accessed 10th Feb. 2015)

[40] http://colombogazette.com/2014/07/11/some-ngos-armed-the-ltte-says-pm/ (last accessed 10th Feb. 2015). This move was met with enthusiastic support from state run media who accused NGOs of fanning the flames of Tamil rebellion and undermining the countries stability (http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2014/07/13/main_Editorial.asp, last accessed 10th Feb. 2015)

[41] As a result of this, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) took the decision to cancel funding for a voter education program after the Sri Lankan Government raised objections http://www.ft.lk/2014/07/05/us-axes-lankan-voter-education-funding-amid-controversy/ (last accessed 10th Feb. 2015)

[42] http://www.ceylontoday.lk/52-62465-news-detail-new-laws-against-ngos-should-not-be-a-witch-hunt.html (Last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[43] http://www.sundaytimes.lk/140831/news/after-ngos-foundations-to-come-under-watch-115994.html (last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[44] http://www.ft.lk/2014/07/05/us-axes-lankan-voter-education-funding-amid-controversy/ (Last accessed on 13th Feb. 2015)

[45] http://www.dailymirror.lk/news/49222-rajarata-uni-student-unions-dissolved.html (Last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[46] https://ihrdc.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/repression-of-dissent-in-sri-lanka-may-2014-english.pdf (last accessed 10th Feb. 2015)

[47] http://www.tamilguardian.com/article.asp?articleid=10974 (last accessed 10th Feb. 2015)

by police for his involvement in a remembrance event[48] and posters carrying death threats against Dr A. Rasakumaran and four students appeared.[49] The University was again closed from 26th of November to 1st of December 2014, with reports that several hundreds of heavily armed military personnel had taken control of both entrances and asked students to leave.[50]

Student activists were arrested,[51] faced suspensions, bans on entering university premises and disciplinary hearings.[52] Student protests were attacked and disrupted[53] and the Police had surrounded a University searching for student activists.[54] A court had reportedly warned a female student activist not to participate in political activities because of her gender. Another court told two students charged for obstructing the Police that their necks should be broken, despite reports that the students had been arrested and beaten by the Police.[55] Student activists were discredited as 'fools, lunatics, foxes' by the Minister of Higher Education.[56] Several Sinhalese Academics had also received death threats.[57]

8. Attacks and threats to lawyers, religious leaders, community based activists, opposition politicians

The President of the Bar Association was subjected to surveillance and followed in a threatening manner[58] and two human rights lawyers received death threats in September.[59] Venerable Vijitha Thero, a Buddhist Monk and minority rights campaigner was subjected to repeated threats, intimidation and attacks by Bodu Bala Sena (BBS), an extremist Buddhist group, throughout the first half of the year.[60] The BBS had also accused the Catholic Bishop of Mannar,

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[48] http://www.sundaytimes.lk/140525/news/juta-president-dr-rasakumaran-decries-tid-questioning-for-organising-commemoration-ceremony-100254.html (last accessed 10th Feb. 2015)

[49] The posters stated "These people are reviving the LTTE. We will kill them. We will not allow Heroes' Week commemorations"

[50] http://www.colombomirror.com/?p=1256 (last Accessed 12th Feb. 2015)

[51] Such incidents were reported in August (https://ihrdc.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/repression-of-dissent-in-sri-lanka-august-2014-english-26sep2014.pdf, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015) and June (http://www.dailymirror.lk/news/48838-bandaras-arrest-part-of-witch-hunt-iusf.html, last accessed 10th Feb. 2015)

[52] https://ihrdc.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/repression-of-dissent-in-sri-lanka-june-2014-english.pdf (Last accessed on 13th Feb. 2015)

[53] http://www.lankatruth.com/home/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7851:banner-for-education-causes-namals-thugs-to-stampede-&catid=42:smartphones&Itemid=74 (Last accessed 13th Feb. 2015), https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/bar-association-condemns-police-inaction-during-ruhuna-university-attack/ (Last accessed 13th Feb. 2015). In June and July, a protest site was subjected to arson attack twice http://www.hirunews.lk/87125/rajarata-uni-students-sathyagraha-hut-burnt-for-third-time , last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[54] http://www.lankaviews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11835:police-surround-buddhist-and-pali-university-search-for-iusf-representatives&catid=150:lead-news&Itemid=113 (Last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[55] "Monthly update on repression of students in Sri Lanka" – June edition, by "Students for Human Rights" cited at: https://ihrdc.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/repression-of-dissent-in-sri-lanka-august-2014-english-26sep2014.pdf (last accessed 10th Feb. 2015)

[56] http://newsfirst.lk/english/2014/06/allied-healthscience-students-issue-will-provide-answers-foxes-s-b-dissanayake/38708 (In Sinhalese with some English translation, last accessed on 13th Feb. 2015)

[57] In June, Dr. Nirmal Ranjith a vocal critic of the Government and former President of Federation of University Teachers' Associations (FUTA)reported that he and his family had received death threats (http://www.lankatruth.com/home/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7119:death-threats-to-dr-nirmal-ranjith-devasiri-&catid=42:smartphones&Itemid=74, last accessed 10th Feb. 2015). The Government was also accused of being behind death threats against lecturers of the University of Ruhuna, which was said to be in response to the support given to students who had themselves been subjected to attacks after protesting against a Government exhibition earlier that month (https://www.srilankamirror.com/news/15324-death-threats-to-ruhuna-university-lecturers, last accessed 10th Feb. 2015).

[58] He has been a vocal critique of the government and prominent advocate of Rule of Law and independence of the judiciary. http://srilankabrief.org/2014/07/lawyers-collective-condemns-move-to-intimidate-the-president-of-the-basl-and-calls-for-an-impartial-investigation/ and http://srilankabrief.blogspot.ro/2014/07/sri-lanka-unidentified-motorcyclists_20.html#more (Last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[59] http://www.ft.lk/2014/09/16/lawyers-collective-condemns-death-threats-to-attorneys/ (Last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[60] In June, after police protection was removed without explanation, he was found naked on the roadside, his hands bound behind him suffering from serious injuries (http://groundviews.org/2014/06/20/did-the-bbs-attack-vijitha-thero-again/ , last accessed 13th Feb. 2015). The police claimed that the injuries were self-inflicted and the Court twice refused him bail, despite him stating that

another prominent human rights defender, of supporting the LTTE[61] and condemned the Pope's visit to Sri Lanka due to fears that the Pope may raise concerns about the country's human rights record.[62] The Mannar Bishop was also stopped from visiting Tamil political prisoners in April 2014.[63] Rev. Fr. Sathivel, an Anglican Priest active in the human rights field for decades, was subjected to threats and intimidation in August 2014.[64] In July 2014, media reported that the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the Police had called neighbours of government critique and senior literary figure Gamini Viyangoda to inquire about him.[65] Restrictions were imposed on an exiled activist visiting Sri Lanka for the funeral of his mother.[66] A community based activist fighting against evictions was abducted in February 2014.[67] Three residents in the Ampara district had complained to the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka that that Army was harassing them for filing a fundamental rights petitions in the Supreme Court challenging the Army's attempts to remove them from their land.[68] Opposition politicians also faced threats and attacks when they tried to engage in fact finding missions and other activities critical of the government.[69]Tamil politicians were subjected to arrest, threats and intimidation.[70] The Secretary to the Ministry of Defence also stated publicly that the Ilangkai Tamil Arasu Kadchi (ITAK), a major Tamil political party, should be neutralized, saying that they have separatist tendencies.[71]

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he had been abducted and beaten (http://groundviews.org/2014/06/20/did-the-bbs-attack-vijitha-thero-again/, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[61] http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=102041 (last accessed 12th Feb. 2015)

[62] http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it/en/world-news/detail/articolo/sri-lanka-sri-lanka-sri-lanka-35681/ (last accessed 12th Feb. 2015)

[63] https://ihrdc.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/repression-of-dissent-in-sri-lanka-april-2014-english.pdf (Last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[64] https://ihrdc.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/repression-of-dissent-in-sri-lanka-august-2014-english-26sep2014.pdf (Last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[65] https://ihrdc.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/repression-of-dissent-in-sri-lanka-july-2014-english-07sep2014.pdf (Last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[66] https://ihrdc.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/repression-of-dissent-in-sri-lanka-july-2014-english-07sep2014.pdf (Last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[67] http://www.lankatruth.com/home/sinhala/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=9828:2014-02-22-14-58-11&catid=36:2011-10-17-04-27-38&Itemid=72 (In Sinhalese, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[68] http://www.thesundayleader.lk/2014/03/09/ashraff-nagar-residents-seek-hrc-solution/ (Last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[69] For example, then Opposition MP was attacked when tried to visit an area where there were riots against Muslims (http://www.lankasrinews.com/view.php?22qKH303dOK4e2HqGcb2a1Jdd3175bc3qD8e43Vf20235Co3, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015). A fact finding mission attacked in April (https://ihrdc.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/repression-of-dissent-in-sri-lanka-april-2014-english.pdf, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015) and another one prevented in July (http://www.asianmirror.lk/news/item/2074-unp-mps-prevented-from-entering-sapugaskanda-refinery/2074-unp-mps-prevented-from-entering-sapugaskanda-refinery, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015). A peace march was also stopped in July (http://srilankabrief.org/2014/07/an-injury-to-one-is-an-injury-to-all-lets-fight-the-racism-communalism/#more-19212, last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[70] For example, see https://ihrdc.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/repression-of-dissent-in-sri-lanka-august-2014-english-26sep2014.pdf (Last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)

[71] http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=110143 (Last accessed 13th Feb. 2015)